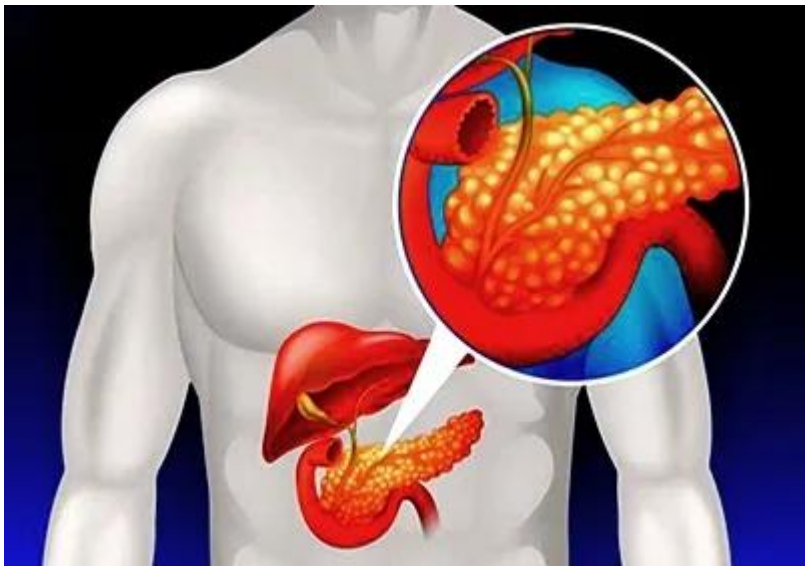
For 13.5% of people between the ages of 20 and 39 worldwide, alcohol is the cause of death. Additionally, adolescents and young adults- especially young women- are experiencing a disproportionate rise in the incidence of alcohol-associated liver disease. In this study, Canadian scientists investigated the epidemiology of alcohol-associated end-organ complications among adolescents and young adults in the general population over the previous 20 years.



About the study

In this retrospective, population-based cohort analysis, the authors used routinely gathered emergency department or inpatient visits for end-organ alcohol-related damage by adolescents and young adults from 2003 to 2021.

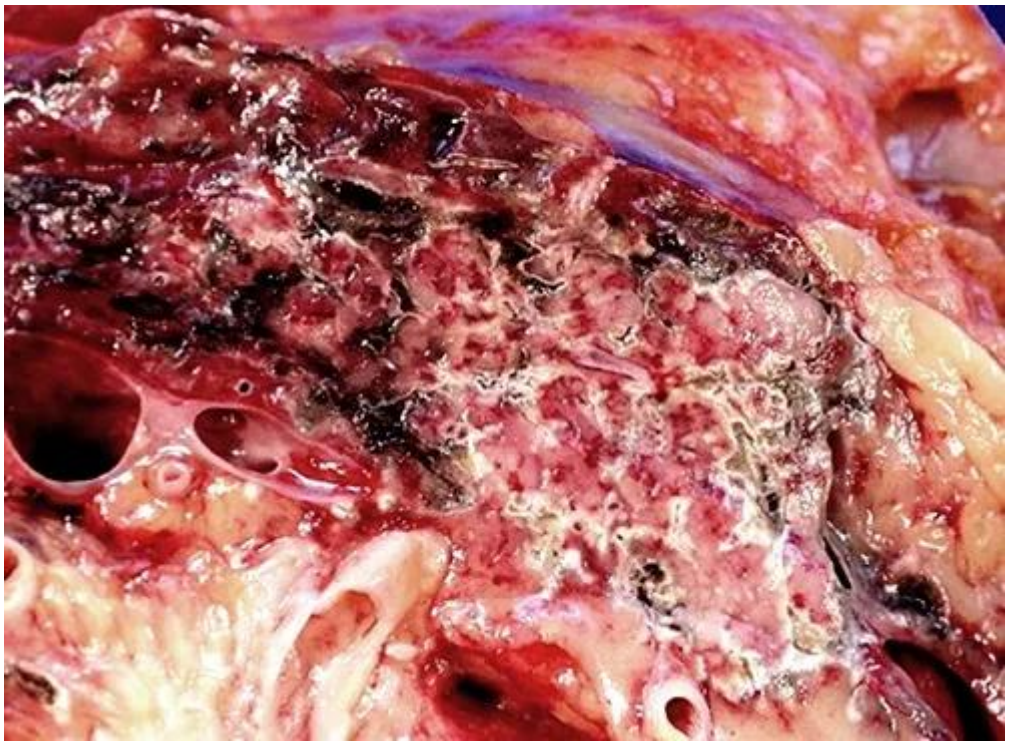
The data were categorized by organ: (1) pancreas (alcohol-associated acute and chronic pancreatitis); (2) liver (alcohol-associated liver disease, alcohol-associated hepatitis, alcohol-associated cirrhosis); and (3) other organs (stomach, adrenal glands, nervous system, muscles, and heart). The involved participants were between 13 and 39 years old. Age-adjusted annual incidence rates of alcohol-related encounters were calculated per 100,000 person-years and stratified by organ type and sex.

Results

In total, 11,508 adolescents and young adults with an alcohol-related incident end-organ complications were identified. Most (64%) were males with a median age of 28 (22-34) years.

Alcohol-associated pancreatic complications were more frequent than liver-related

complications (29% versus 19%, respectively). The most frequent pancreatic complication was acute pancreatitis (92%). Those with pancreatic complications were more likely to be male (71%), reside in urban locations (88%), and require hospitalization (77%) than those with other end-organ complications.



Acute necrotizing pancreatitis

The incidence of pancreatitis increased by 7% per year in males and 12% per year in females, whereas liver-related complications increased by 6% per year in males and 9% per year in females. In other organs, the incidence of end-organ alcohol damage decreased by 1% per year in males but increased by 2% per year in females.

Conclusion

This study, which investigated alcohol-associated end-organ complications among adolescents and young adults, showed that alcohol-associated gastrointestinal complications are increasing at rates much higher than in other organ systems. Additionally, males were most affected by acute pancreatitis, but the rates of alcohol-associated pancreatitis and alcohol-associated liver disease were higher in young females than young males.

The authors emphasized that, to their knowledge, this is the first study that describes the

epidemiology of alcohol-associated pancreatitis among adolescents and young adults. They concluded that these results highlight that gastroenterologists' care is crucial for people with alcohol use disorder.

This study was published in JAMA Network Open.

Journal Reference

Chapman O, Djerboua M, Rai M, Bechara R, Flemming JA. Alcohol-Associated Pancreatitis and Liver Disease Among Adolescents and Young Adults. JAMA Netw Open. 2025;8(2): e2461990. (Open Access)
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